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ABSTRACT

This report describes a classroom communication training program for foreign teaching assistants (FTAs) developed at the University of Minnesota in response to evidence that the FTAs were the subject of criticism and complaints because of poor communication abilities in their classes. The first two sections of the paper discuss the background to the project and the design and development of the course. The third section reports the results of the FTAs' evaluation of the cross-cultural component of the program during the first year of the course, including the 12 questions on the survey. This is followed by a section describing the subsequent changes implemented in the program, and the results of the FTAs' evaluation of the cross-cultural component of the program for the second year. The paper concludes with a summary of the two evaluations, discussing the factors responsible for the more favorable second-year evaluation and presenting some suggestions for further changes in the format of the course. (HTH)

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Format and Evaluation of the Cross-Cultural Component of a Foreign Teaching Assistant Training Program

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Background of Project

The special class for Foreign Teaching Assistants (FTAs) at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis Campus, has developed over several years in response to evidence that University students and their parents were becoming concerned about the FTAs' classroom communication abilities. A campus survey conducted in 1968 indicated no special problems with the Foreign Teaching Assistants' English abilities (Jaspe); but the decade of the 70's showed an increasing amount of criticism in the form of complaints to University faculty and administrators, and letters and articles in the campus newspaper, the "Minnesota DAILY".

During Spring Quarter 1979, an "International Issues Survey" was conducted by the International Student Adviser's Office and the Student Life Studies Office. Students at the University of Minnesota were asked, among other things, to compare their Foreign Teaching Assistants and U.S. Teaching Assistants. They responded that their FTAs were equally as knowledgeable as U.S.TAs, but rated the FTAs as less satisfactory in communication ability, teaching effectiveness, and in their understanding of University rules and regulations. More than 43% of the 743 respondents indicated their FTAs had "harmed" course quality, while only 9% said the FTAs had helped. Also, 47% stated their FTAs' overall teaching ability was "worse" or "somewhat worse" than their U.S. TAs' (Matross, Paige and Hendricks, 1980).

Information about Foreign Teaching Assistants was gathered from the perspective of faculty in a questionnaire designed by Kathryn Murphy, Ronald Judy and Zehra Keye and submitted to 55 academic departments in Fall Quarter 1979 (Mestenhauser, et al, 1980, and Keye, 1980). In this survey, it was learned that there is no criterion for the testing of spoken English before Foreign Teaching Assistants are hired. The main criterion cited by the 40 departments who responded was the "Test of English as a Foreign Language" (TOEFL) which tests reading and comprehension, primarily. Foreign Teaching Assistants at that time formed about 19% of the total TAs on campus, and about 17% of the total graduate students.

In 1979-80, the number of foreign students on U.S. campuses, nationally, increased to 286,000. The largest number of those (51,870) were Iranian; second were the Taiwanese (17,530). The OPEC nations, who had constituted 9% of the nationwide total in 1968-69, had increased their numbers to 35% of the total (101,160 students) in the 1979-80 school year (Open Doors, 1978-79).

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Such changes in the student population contribute to a decrease in foreign student understanding of the U.S. students, classrooms, and educational procedures, as such students are less familiar with U.S. customs, beliefs and values.

In an effort to assist some FTAs in their adjustment and to help assure continuation of the international exchange of Teaching Assistants, a special course for FTAs was developed at the University of Minnesota. It officially began in Winter Quarter 1978, as an English as a Second Language offering focusing on the FTAs' interactional skills, listening, and speaking/pronunciation, although a few individual Departments had offered help to their own students previous to that time. During the second and third offerings of the ESL class, an Effective Teaching Skills component was added which utilized extensive videotaping of FTA mock presentations and later viewing in one-to-one tutorials.

During Fall Quarter 1979, a grant to Josef Mestenhauser and Betty Robinnett from the National Association of Foreign Student Affairs (NAFSA) allowed another offering of the course with an added cross-cultural component and with actual classroom presentations to University of Minnesota English Composition classes in addition to the videotaped FTA class practice presentations. That 1979 class was extensively videotaped, and resulted in a series of eight training tapes and an accompanying report/manual (Mestenhauser, et al, 1980), available for purchase from Josef Mestenhauser, International Student Adviser's Office, 717 E. River Road, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN 55455. The set of videotapes is available for loan from NAFSA, 1860 - 19th Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009. In addition, the actual classroom presentations by the FTAs provided the data for a doctoral dissertation (Keye, 1980).

Course Design

The format of the Fall Quarter 1979 course consisted of separate ESL and cross-cultural components. The ESL component was taught by two ESL instructors who met with the FTAs for two class sessions per week and on an individual basis for a student/instructor tutorial once each week. During the tutorials, the videotaped mock presentations were reviewed and critiqued.

The cross-cultural component met for one class session each week. The ten sessions consisted of a series of separate but related presentations by faculty members who, concerned with the FTA issue, donated their time to the effort. Presentations for the ten weeks were on the topics of: (Week 1) Establishing Rapport, (Weeks 2, 3 and 4) Classroom Communication, (5) Asking Questions, (6) Lesson Planning, (7) Test Construction and Evaluation, (8) Advising Students, and (9 and 10) Summary and Synthesis. The classes were held for one hour, at 8:00 a.m., Fridays. (For a more complete description of both the ESL and cross-cultural components, see Mestenhauser, et al, 1980.)

The FTAs were also given practical experience in actual 20-minute classroom lectures to freshman students in English Composition classes. This portion of the cross-cultural component provided the data (Keye, 1980) for assessing

changes in the Composition students' perceptions of the FTAs' presentations from time one (third week of the Quarter) to time two (10th week of the Quarter). To make the results meaningful, homogeniety of classes was necessary. This was achieved by having the presentations made to similar classes.

The results of this research showed, among other findings, significant increases in the total number of positive comments made by the Composition class students, and significant decreases in the number of negative comments made, after the FTAs had gone through the training program. It also showed that the Composition students were more favorable toward FTAs who spoke in their classes about something related to their home cultures, than to those who made presentations on "subject-matter" topics related to a field of study. Overall, the results of Keye's study indicated that the training class for Foreign Teaching Assistants did effectively improve FTA ability to function in the U.S. classroom environment. This favorable response to FTA training from the English Composition Class students provided encouragement for the continuation of the course.

Evaluation of the Cross-Cultural Component, 1979

Also during Fall Quarter 1979, the FTAs themselves were surveyed to assess their impressions of the cross-cultural component of the course. Ten of 18 participants completed the staff-designed, twelve-item evaluation questionnaire. Although the number of respondents was small, the information is believed representative of the opinions expressed by the total group of TAs during and after the course. It offered valuable insights into the success/non-success of the experimental class and provided guidelines for the continuance of the program (See Dege, "Evaluation of Cross-Cultural Training Component" in Mestenhauser, et al, 1980.)

The FTAs were asked to use a 5-point Likert-type scale on some questions, with "1" equaling "low" and "5" equaling "high". Individual instructions were not included for each individual question, and some respondents wrote in words for answers on Questions One, Two, and Five. Those answers showed the instructions were not clear, and some worded responses had to be discarded because they could not logically be translated into the numbering system. Responses to that questionnaire were:

1. How clear and interesting was the presentation of each of the instructors?

   The summary of responses = 3.47; range was from 2.2 to 4.4.

2. How much did you learn from the course in the areas of its stated objectives?

Establish rapport with the students:	3.67	
Effective teaching strategies:		4.0
Classroom management procedures:	3.25	
Leading discussion groups:	3.14	
Planning lessons:	3.0	
Methods of student evaluation:		2.63
Advising students:	3.0	
Practicing giving lectures:	4.22	

3. Are there any basic cultural differences between the United States and your country which affected your role as a teaching assistant? If "yes", how important are these differences (use scale of five)?

   "Yes" = 60%; "no" = 40%. Mean of "yes" = 3.17, SD .75.

4. Are there any significant differences in the classroom procedures between the educational system in the U.S. and your country? If yes, how important are these differences in the way in which they affected your role as a teaching assistant?

   "Yes" = 70%; "No" = 30%. Mean of "yes" = 2.5; SD 1.22.

5. How important were the original objectives for this component? Please rank them in order of importance.

Rapport with the students:	4.60	
Classroom management procedures:	3.20	
Effective teaching strategies:		3.20
Leading discussion groups:	3.60	
Planning sessions:	6.60	
Methods of student evaluation:		7.40
Advising students:	5.00	
Practice in lecturing:	2.00	

6. From retrospect, would you suggest that some lectures, material, or subject be deleted in the future? Which?

   "No" = 50%; "yes" = 40%; no answer = 10%. Two negative respondents commented on cross-cultural training in a general fashion; one referred to a specific lecture on communication systems, and one said too much was included so the focus was not clear.

7. From retrospect, would you like to have spent more time on other subjects or materials, or added new ones? Which?

   A review of the comments showed most FTAs would have preferred spending more time on the tutorial sections. Other topics mentioned were (in descending order) speech practice, pronunciation, accent, intonation, teaching practice, conversational skill, work on videotape, spoken American English, and (practice) lectures. One person commented the "time was too short" and another that the instructors' work was "wonderful".

8. Aside from your knowledge of spoken English, what did you consider to be the major problem for you in teaching U.S. students?

   The following were listed as major problems: teaching strategies and skills, rapport with students, pronunciation, English, attitude, attitude toward students, classroom delivery, explaining clearly, and communication.

9. Did the course help you solve this problem completely, or partially, or not at all?

   One person responded that the course had solved problems completely; nine people responded that problems had been solved partially.

10. If possible, would you be satisfied if the course were to be compressed into one week of an intensified "institute" held just prior to the beginning of each term? Please comment on this possibility, or suggest other possibilities.

    Eight of the respondents did not wish to have the course consolidated into a short course. Of the two who did approve of that, one thought the course should be a prerequisite for TA candidates. The negative responses included the following reasons: time to practice skills is needed, time to understand is needed, the small-group 1-to-1 basis is good, should last full quarter, maybe 2 weeks at night or 10:00-2:00 in day; and would not take it.

11. If it is not possible for the University to underwrite this or similar course in the future, would you have been willing to pay a fee for it? How much would it be worth to you in dollars? What would you change to make it worth the fee?

    Five persons said they would pay an average of $35.00 (range was $20.00 to $50.00). Their comments were to give more opportunity for teaching exercise, to offer it as a credit course, to include more intensified discussion, to give more time for short lectures and more tutorial classes, and to offer it for free. Another student commented on the difficulty of meeting differing needs of the students.

12. Please give us any other comments, suggestions or reactions which you think would be helpful to us in structuring future courses, or to other foreign students in enrolling in them.

    Students' comments included: a suggestion that the class should be two hours in length; that too much emphasis on cultural differences made the student feel uneasy in improving his adjustment to the U.S. environment; that more discussion was needed, possibly with U.S. students invited to join the discussion; that the course should focus on one or two topics by one or two instructors, and that the small-group format was useful in this case; to remember that the FTA's big problem is English; not to have it at 8:00 a.m.; to divide the course upon differences in backgrounds of beginners/advanced students; and to have the course be more practical than theoretical. Several FTAs commented on their enjoyment of the course, and one said he would recommend it to a friend.

The ratings of individual instructors in Question 1 seemed to indicate that those instructors with higher visibility through more frequent contact and/or

more teaching time were given higher ratings than others. There were eight instructors for the ten sessions. The lowest score corresponded with the lowest rating in Questions 2, 5, and 7/8, seeming to indicate a distaste for the content of the class on evaluation rather than for the instructor. That "methods of student evaluation" was the lowest priority on both Questions 2 and 5, was balanced by the fact that "practice in lecturing" was rated most important of the original objectives and most learned about during the classes.

Questions 3 and 4 are most interesting in their suggestion of a lack of awareness of American students' criticisms of foreign TAs, as 40% of the international students answered that there are no cultural problems which affect their roles as teaching assistants. Those who did recognize the cultural factors did, however, attribute more importance to cultural factors than to differences in classroom procedures (3.17 to 2.5). Another observation is that while four persons did not perceive cultural differences and four persons saw no need for cross-cultural training, only one person both saw no cultural differences and saw no need for cross-cultural training. That one person and one other who responded negatively to Question 3 cited language difficulties as the major problem to overcome. The three others who responded negatively to Question 3 saw nothing in the cross-cultural training component which should be deleted, one suggesting that the focus was not clear.

A few comments referred to the few incidents of confusion which were related to the experimental, first-time nature of the course component. One person commented that the cross-cultural sections were not well-conducted, and another in Question 12 suggested a focus on one or two topics and fewer instructors. Over all, however, the majority of responses were in favor of continuing the various parts of the component.

Perhaps the most significant comment made was, "Too much emphasis on cultural differences make (sic) me feel uneasy in improving my adjustment to U.S. environment...". Cognitive study of cultural differences is thought to increase, rather than decrease, tension between cultural groups. Confronting the issue of cultural difference is a risky business and creates denial, suspicion, and unease. But pretending that the issue doesn't exist does not make it go away; it merely creates a "hidden agenda" which interferes with successful communication and (in the classroom) learning (Dege, 1979).

The cross-cultural training component had received minimal approval; the question then became how to improve the series of classes to alleviate the tensions and encourage more learning, for the next (Fall Quarter 1980) course. The answers to that question were found in the questionnaire responses and in suggestions to staff from participants.

The ideal composite format would be offered for a full quarter, perhaps for credit, and would be less fragmented. Fewer lecture classes would be offered, and more time given to discussion groups, with the FTA participants leading groups and practicing other teaching styles which might not be familiar to them. Instead of factual outlining of cultural differences, more time to discuss individual differences would be provided with the course instructors acting as facilitators and openly joining in the discussions rather than maintaining their lecturer/leader roles.

Downplaying the general cultural differences (which can be rejected as stereotypes) and emphasizing real, personal, ongoing classroom problems and solutions--relevant to the FTAs and drawn from the participants rather than imposed upon them by observation--would increase both the practicality and the comfort level for the FTAs. Fewer instructors and more consistent involvement of all instructors would add cohesion to the group. With these modifications, it was believed the FTA Training Program would fulfill its promise of success.

The Fall Quarter 1980 FTA Training Program

With funding from the Graduate School, the course was again offered as a non-credit three-hour class during Fall Quarter 1980, limited to 20 students. Two ESL instructors and one cross-cultural component half-time instructor positions were funded. Karen Sorenson and Susan Gillette, of the English as a Second Language Program in the Linguistics Department competently filled the ESL positions. The cross-cultural component position was filled by three people who divided the tasks between them, as they were all equally qualified and all interested in participation in the program. This resulted in much more time devoted to the project than the total of 20 hours per week stated in the job description. Debbie Baker, Zehra Keye, and Dolores Dege, all graduate students at that time in the Department of Speech Communication's Intercultural Communication Division, shared the position. The course was designed with two sections of 10 students each. An ESL instructor and a cross-cultural component instructor formed teams for classroom instruction. Zehra Keye coordinated the actual presentations to English Composition classes, as she had the previous year. Because the sections were separated, they developed their individual formats with moderate input from each other; in spite of this individuality, the formats developed were quite similar.

Each section developed the idea of small-group (half the section) meetings to discuss cross-cultural issues with the cross-cultural instructor facilitating. Both team-taught the regular class sessions, and separated for the cross-cultural small groups and for the ESL tutorials.

The major changes incorporated, therefore, from 1979 to 1980 were:

> The team-teaching model of instruction rather than the separate ESL and cross-cultural instruction of the previous year.
>
> Incorporation of the cross-cultural component into the "regular" class time instead of having a separate day for it; instead of two ESL sessions and one cross-cultural session, there were three joint ESL/cross-cultural sessions. Both team members attended all sessions.
>
> Division of the sections into smaller sub-groups for discussion of cross-cultural topics, in addition to the regular class sessions. (This was done in both sections, but was accomplished in slightly different ways.)

The basic syllabus handed out on the first day of class stated:

> Requirements:
>
> 2 class hours per week; 1 tutorial hour per week; 1 conference hour per week; 1 presentation to a University class and individualized follow-up during the 7th week of the Quarter.

Class Activities:

Establishing rapport -- A 3-5 minute simulated presentation of syllabus and the mechanics of the TAs course as it would be on the first day of class.

Definition of a term -- A 3-5 minute definition of a term in the FTA's field.

Explaining a graph, diagram, or table -- A 5-minute explanation of a visual display of information from the FTA's field.

Lecture -- A 15-minute lecture on a topic of general interest from the FTA's field of study.

Conference Sessions (Small group meetings):

These sessions will focus on:

1. Communicative and procedural norms in an American classroom.

2. Awareness of audience expectations based on cultural differences.

3. Understanding the self as teacher and cultural entity.

The class sessions included input from both ESL and cross-cultural component instructors, but because of the nature of the major instructional activity (simulated presentations made by the FTAs to the rest of the group) much of the in-class peer evaluation was facilitated by the ESL instructor, with additional input from the cross-cultural instructor.

On some days, especially earlier in the quarter, the focus was on cross-cultural issues, with the cross-cultural component instructor facilitating. Later, as the small-group sessions evolved into effective discussions of the FTAs' actual on-going incidents encountered in their assistantship duties, or in their student life, there was less differentiation in class between "who was doing what".

The tutorial viewing of videotapes of the FTA presentations remained an important part of the total course; this individualized criticism was non-threatening, and allowed the speaker to observe his/her difficulties directly. Further, the individualized tutorial following the English Composition class presentation during the 7th week of the Quarter gave each FTA important information about how his/her classroom presentation style and communicative abilities had been perceived by the U.S. students. As one FTA commented, it was much easier to make that first classroom presentation in that situation, rather than waiting until the "trial period" of grading papers, etc., was over, and he had an actual class to teach. (All but one of the FTAs, being new to their positions during that Fall Quarter, were assisting with classroom instruction but not actually teaching.)

The Cross-Cultural Component, 1980

Although the two groups' cross-cultural sessions did not exactly correspond, they were similar. The biggest change was to a more spontaneous form of instruction, contrasted to the primarily lecture or question/answer modes of the previous year. Both began with a class-session presentation on cultural awareness. Then followed small-group sessions with such basic topics as values, non-verbal communication patterns across cultures, cultural differences between their and U.S. classrooms, etc. With the non-threatening small-group format, the students were at ease to (and did) bring up questions about courting rituals, parenting, and other personal issues.

One instructor utilized videotaped critical incidents to promote discussion early in the sessions (the FTA Training Tape Series "Critical Incident" tape, for one). The small group discussions which these generated were perceived as very valuable by the participants. The cross-cultural component ended with a pot-luck dinner (an American cultural experience) at which time Certificates of Attendance were distributed.

Evaluation of 1980 Cross-Cultural Component

Almost the same questionnaire was given to the participants in the 1980 course; it was adapted slightly to suit the needs of the dual-session approach. The same 5-point scale with "5" being "high" and "1" being "low" was used.

Briefly, the responses were as follows. Comparisons have been made, where possible...not all questions corresponded exactly.

1. How clear and interesting was the presentation of each of the instructors?

   Clear = 4.85; interesting = 4.63; average = 4.64 (an increase of 1.17 points from 1979).

2. How much did you learn from the course in the areas of its stated objectives?

	1980	
establish rapport with the students:	4.16	+0.49
effective teaching strategies:	4.23	+0.23
classroom management procedures:	4.00	+0.75
methods of evalation used in classrooms:	4.00	+1.37
practicing giving lectures:	4.69	+0.47
cross-cultural effectiveness:	3.85	n/a
planning lessons:	4.23	+1.23

3. Are there any basic cultural differences between the United States and your country which affect your role as a teaching assistant? If yes, how important are they?

   "Yes" = 71%; "no" = 29%; degree of importance = 2.91. (In 1979, 60% answered "yes; 40% "no". This shows more awareness of cultural differences.)

4. Are there any significant differences in classroom procedures between the educational system in the U.S. and in your country? If "yes", how important are these differences in the way in which they affect your role as a teaching assistant?

"Yes" = 71%; "no" = 29%; degree of importance = 3.20. (In 1979 the answers were quite similar: "yes" = 70%; "no" = 30%.)

5. How important are the following to your work as a teaching assistant? Please number them, with "1" being the most important, "2" being the next most important, etc. (Range is from 1 to 10.)

	1980	(1979)
rapport with the students:	4.51	(4.60)
classroom management procedures:	5.20	(3.20)
effective teaching strategies:	2.42	(3.20)
practice giving lectures:	3.29	(2.00)
leading discussion groups:	6.14	(3.60)
planning lessons:	3.00	(6.60)
advising students:	5.26	(5.00)
cross-cultural effectiveness:	7.11	n/a
methods of evaluation used:	5.67	(7.40)
English pronunciation:	2.94	n/a

6. In retrospect, would you suggest that some materials or topics be deleted in the future? Which?

Four said "no"; four did not answer. Comments from the others included:

--smaller classes (5 or less) with more emphasis on actual classroom practices
--add lectures about #5 content
--the last strategy of dividing class in two was good
--I think it is the best way to practice in his own field (of study)
--discussions in class of chosen topics instead of presentations

7. In retrospect, would you have liked to spend more time on other subjects or materials, or added new ones? Which?

Three said "none"; five didn't answer; comments included:

--more time in visiting and pronunciation
--we contrated on our field...maybe that is enough
--more in-class (actual) practices, say 3 instead of 1; for 3-4 credits 2 times a year
--practice in impromptu answering of student questions.

8.* Aside from your knowledge of spoken English, what did you consider to be the major problem for you in teaching U.S. students (or what do you consider to be the major problem for you if you have not yet taught?

9.* Did the course help you solve this problem? Completely, partially, not at all?

*Answers to both Qeustions 8 and 9 are given below.

--knowledge and understanding of my field (partially)
--to be able to speak impromptu; to answer the students (completely)
--pace, stress and rhythm (partially)
--pronunciation, stress & rhythm (partially)
--the differences between the students, and cultural differences between the foreign TA and the American students (almost completely)
--pronunciation, stress & rhythm (completely)
--to learn the students' response (partially)
--cultural differences and expectations; pronunciation and intonation (almost completely, with a little practice needed)
--to express the way of thinking about the subject as clear as possible (no answer to Question 9)
--answering questions posed by the students (partially)
--effective teaching strategies (partially)

10. If possible, would you be satisfied if the course were to be compressed into one week of an intensified "institute" held just prior to the beginning of each term? Please comment on this possibility or suggest other possibilities.

"No" = 8; "yes" = 1; "maybe" = 4. (These are similar to 1979.) Comments included:

--it is possible...give more time to TA to have presentations
--in one sense is good...you have all the information prior to the beginning of class; but is bad in the sense that I think we can hear more and think more about it if the learning is equally distributed in the quarter
--it is a good idea to have a one-week intensive course prior to the beginning of each term, but I doubt about the availability of time
--no, because I had to spend much time for preparing
--no, I think that the program is useful and it needs only more hours than now
--I think it is better to give an additional course just prior to the beginning of the academic year

11. If it is not possible in the future for the University to underwrite this or a similar course, would you have been willing to pay a fee for it? How much would it be worth to you in dollars? What would you want changed to make the course worth the fee?

Eleven of the students, or 79% would pay for the course. The average of figures cited was $54.00. Answers were: $25.00; $20.00; small as possible; $35 to $45; Yes, $25.00 for the service of the instructor; $50.00 with more speaking; $200.00 or more if given credit for the course...grant credit, make it a regular course so students can take it at their convenience; $15.00, no changes; and three simply said "yes".

12. What was the MOST helpful part of the course, for you personally?

Three people said "practice giving lectures"; two said "tutorial sessions"and "TV video of one's own speech". Others said: real opportunity to give lectures, plus feedback; recognizing my mistakes (what I did without realizing); having a good experience; improving English; the personal counseling was very rewarding; the speech given to students in a classroom and tutorials.

13. What was the LEAST helpful part of the course for you personally?

Three did not answer. Two said "none". Other comments were: evaluating others in class; making comments on others presentations; cross-cultural; class schedule was bad...it was too early; teaching strategies and so on; to understand American culture; cruss-cultural effectiveness; it is necessary to improve in importance the conferences (one every week).*

*This may refer to the fact that the small-group sessions were held for only part of the quarter.

14. Please give us any other comments, suggestions or reactions which you think would be helpful to us in structuring future courses; or suggestions for other foreign students who might enroll in them.

Four persons said "none"; two people said they will recommend the course to other FTAs. Other comments were: try to be in class every day; how do the students get more guidance from the teacher?...you must make the students interested in each class, especially when they don't have presentations; cross-cultural; I really appreciate my instructors; individual viewing of TV besides tutorials; advance courses on grammar, conversation, make speeches to a new class; less classroom and more counseling and practices... the course is very good, and has done a lot of good to my ego--in short, it has transformed me into a good teacher in a short time...I have improved in everything, even my speed, and all because of this course; conduct the course in connection with the appropriate department of which the student belongs, e.g., for students of Economics, a joint program in connection with the School of Business Management.

Summary and Suggestions for the Future

Both evaluation summaries have been presented here so that you might see the differences in comments made, and the more favorable overall evaluations during the second year of the cross-cultural component. The major factors influencing this more favorable evaluation appear to be: 1) the team-teaching mode, 2) the small-group discussion sessions, and 3) the opportunity to discuss cultural issues which pertained to the individual FTA. The several references to "counseling sessions" in the comments were interesting; there were no counseling sessions. That these small-group discussion sessions were perceived by several participants as counseling sessions shows that the topics discussed were personalized. The somewhat lower rating of cross-cultural topics also shows that the discussion of such topics related to the FTAs was not perceived as discussion of cultural issues but of personal issues.

Providing an opportunity for the FTAs to discuss their individual problems (which often were not perceived as cross-cultural in nature) greatly improved the course for both sections. The contradictions in the evaluation of the 1980 course bear this out, as several people spoke of "counseling" although the content of these small groups was related to cross-cultural adjustment. Even though they talked in the small groups about proxemics, differences in non-verbal cues across cultures, etc., and then (on information from Dr. Keye about the FTA classroom presentations) related some of those same ideas to their student audiences, they at the same time gave the abstract idea of cross-cultural effectiveness lower ratings than more concrete issues related to teaching skills. The connection between the two wasn't always made.

The FTAs who took this course spent many hours in preparation and class attendance without receiving course credit. With classroom sessions, tutorials, small groups, and Composition Class presentations with accompanying one-hour feedback sessions, each student was involved in at least five class hours per week--plus preparation time. The people involved in the development of the course and the instructors are currently petitioning to have the course offered as a 3-credit course in the Department of Speech Communication in the future. This will "legitimize" the effort the FTAs put forth in improving their classroom communication abilities.

If further changes are made in the format of the course, the author would suggest the adaptation of a technique employed during the final weeks of the Quarter by Group I (Gillette/Matreyek). One problem had been trying to arrange time for all the activities; another had been maintaining other-FTA interest while individual FTAs made their practice presentations. Gillette/Matreyek solved that partially by dividing the class sessions into two groups, several times... half the class provided the "audience" for the speakers; the other half formed their cross-cultural discussion group. Thus, one class-hour per week was saved for both the instructor and the students. This could not be a regular practice for each class session, as it would defeat the "team teaching" intention. It could be used to provide a change in format from time to time.

Innovations attempted on the basis of the 1979 evaluation were not always successful. For example, several U.S. students in the ESL program had desired to join in the classes as audience members, at the suggestion of the FTAs, but they did not do so.

Several FTAs suggested, as did one of the Speech Department professors, that there is no need to continue the Composition Class presentations as the need for homogeniety is no longer an issue; they suggested that the actual classroom presentations might better be given in the FTAs' home departments, perhaps under the supervision/critique of the major advisor.

It would be appropriate at this point to state that all the problems of FTAs in University of Minnesota classrooms have been miraculously solved by this program offering. Of course, that is not true. The "letters to the Daily" continue, and incidents of student discontent with their FTAs still surface.

One recent letter said, in part:

> "(her) assertion that the problem with foreign TAs could be 'in the eye of the beholder' is protective nonense. The problem is indeed in the ear (not the eye) of the student in the classroom, but the cause is in the mouth and the throat of the TA. And, the blame is on University policy that does not make a course in communication mandatory. ... It is a tragic loss for students when inadequate communication--a correctable failure--deprives them of a meeting of minds with brilliant people from other cultures. It is also outrageous that the victimized students, who have paid that hard-to-come-by tuition, should be in jeopardy of losing grade points, which they need for their future careers just as much as the foreign TAs need the teaching fellowship. ..." (Sorem, 1981).

During the past two years, representatives from the University of Minnesota have traveled to various places across the U.S. to present ideas and suggestions for course design to other institutions who are becoming aware of the Foreign Teaching Assistant issue. Presentations have been made at the NAFSA Conference, May, 1979, in Phoenix, Arizona; at the Bi-Regional Nafsa Conference in Claymont, Deleware, in October of 1979; at Texas Tech University, Lubbock, Texas, in February, 1980, etc. In addition, requests for information continue to arrive at the International Student Adviser's Office from institutions such as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the University of Michigan. The videotapes on loan from NAFSA are booked far in advance, even though they recently purchased a second set in an attempt to keep up with the demand.

As the issue of training for Foreign Teaching Assistants is becoming a national concern, the effort made by this small group of ESL/Speech Communication/ISAO instructors is very timely, and hopefully it will continue to serve as a model to others interested in developing similar programs.

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